

Whitetail Deer

Season Forecast

Contributed by Dan Kaminski, Kevin Wallenfang, Melinda Nelson and Meredith Penthorn



After a two-year review of Wisconsin's deer management program, hunters will notice a variety of changes in 2014 designed to increase hunter enjoyment, streamline deer seasons, and provide greater opportunities for hunters and the general public to provide input regarding local deer management decisions.

In 2012, Gov. Scott Walker requested a full and independent review of Wisconsin's deer management practices and hired a deer trustee to initiate the process. Over the course of the past two years, through countless hours of public hearings, public advisory committee meetings and various public comment periods and online

surveys, over 60 recommendations were developed to help improve Wisconsin's deer management and hunting experience. These recommendations were approved by the Natural Resource Board and Gov. Walker, and implementation will begin in 2014.

"The changes to the deer season are not complicated, although they may take some getting used to," said Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources big game specialist Kevin Wallenfang. "This year, we're recommending that hunters focus on the rules that apply to their specific hunting area, rather than trying to understand a lot of things that may not apply to them."

For a complete overview of changes for

the 2014 deer season, please check the 2014 Deer Hunting Regulations available at any hunting license vendor or DNR Service Center. For additional information, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "[deer](#)."

County Deer Advisory Councils

One overarching goal outlined by the Deer Trustee Report was to better engage the public and provide a system that will allow people to take more ownership of local deer management issues. Starting in 2014, new County Deer Advisory Councils are being formed to evaluate a variety of deer metrics, including forestry impacts, agriculture and habitat issues, deer population and health, and hunter satisfaction. County councils will be comprised of representatives from local hunting clubs, conservation clubs, forestry groups, agriculture groups, tourism groups, urban interests, and tribal groups where applicable. Each council will be chaired by a local Wisconsin Conservation Congress delegate – local DNR wildlife biologists will also be present to provide data and technical advice. At least three members on each CDAC must have purchased a deer hunting license in seven of the past 10 years.

In early summer 2014, the department mailed letters to each county board or council and forestry, transportation, and tourism department leaders to solicit a representative for each of the CDAC seats. Letters were also sent to local conservation clubs, giving each an opportunity to nominate someone to represent deer hunter interests in each county.

For more information regarding County Deer Advisory Councils, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "[CDAC](#)."

2014 Deer Season Dates

For detailed season information, pick up a copy of the 2014 Deer Hunting Regulations at any DNR service center or DNR license agent, or by visiting dnr.wi.gov, keyword "deer."

Gun Deer Seasons

Youth Gun Deer Hunt: Oct. 11 and 12 (Youth ages 10–15; Statewide)

November 9–day Gun Deer

Season: Nov. 22–30 (Statewide)

Metro Subunits Gun Deer

Season: Nov. 22–Dec. 10 (Metro Subunits only)

Central Farmland and Central Forest Zone Antlerless–only

Season: Dec. 11–14

Southern Farmland Zone

Antlerless–only Holiday Hunt: Dec. 24–Jan. 1, 2015

Archery & Crossbow Deer Seasons

Statewide: Sept. 13–Jan. 4, 2015

Metro Subunits: Sept. 13 – Jan. 31, 2015

Central Farmland and Central Forest Zone Antlerless–only

Season: Dec. 11–14

Southern Farmland Zone

Antlerless–only Holiday Hunt: Dec. 24 – Jan. 1, 2015

Muzzleloader Deer Season

Muzzleloader Deer Season: Dec. 1–10 (Statewide)

There are a number of changes this year regarding deer season structure, management units and tag availability. The most notable changes are listed below. Be sure to read the 2014 Deer Hunting Regulations for additional information.

What's New in 2014?

Management Zones and Units

- Wisconsin has been divided into four Deer Management Zones that impact bonus permit availability and deer season structure. Nine DMUs are split by zone boundaries.
- The DMUs have been changed and are now designated by county and tribal reservation boundaries.
- The CWD Management Zone has been dissolved. There is now a CWD Affected Area that includes all counties in which baiting and feeding are prohibited.

Seasons and Bag Limits

- The new crossbow deer season runs concurrently with the archery deer season (September 13 – January 4, 2015).
- The purchase of an archer license does not allow the use of a crossbow.
- The bow and crossbow deer seasons will now remain open statewide the day before the November 9-day Gun Deer Season.
- Sighting in firearms and small game hunting with firearms are now allowed statewide on the day before the November 9-day Gun Deer Season.
- The December 4-day antlerless-only hunt will now only occur in the Central Farmland and Central Forest zones.
- The Holiday Hunt has been shortened, and will occur within the Southern Farmland Zone. Only antlerless deer may be taken by firearm, bow or crossbow.

Tags and Licenses

- A free statewide Archery-only Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag is no longer available.
- There will not be any free CWD Management Zone or \$2 Herd Control carcass tags available.
- Youth hunters will receive an Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag, valid for an antlerless deer statewide, with each deer license.
- Class A and C disabled hunters will receive a free Farmland Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag, valid for an antlerless deer statewide, with each deer license.
- State parks are no longer designated as individual DMUs. Hunting access permits are no longer required to hunt in state parks, but vehicle admission stickers are still required.

- Disabled and U.S. Armed Forces members may no longer use their Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag to tag an antlerless deer, but will be issued an Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag that can be used for this purpose statewide.

Bonus Antlerless Deer Permits

- Bonus antlerless permits are valid only in the Zone, DMU and property type (public or private) indicated on the carcass tag.
- Bonus antlerless permits are now public and private land-specific.

Registration

- In 2014, all hunters must register their deer in person at a DNR registration station, unless selected in advance by the department to participate in the electronic registration pilot program.
- Deer must now be registered by 5 p.m. the day after harvest, except during the November 9-day Gun Deer Season, when registration is due by December 1 at 5 p.m. (the day after the season ends).

Transportation

- While afield, no person may possess or transport another hunter's deer, even after it has been registered (unless accompanied by the person for whom the carcass tag was issued). The carcass tag must be attached to the deer. However, anyone may still transport another person's registered deer on a public road or possess it at a residence, camp or business.

Baiting and Feeding of Deer

- The baiting and feeding ban has been extended to include two new counties: Waupaca and Shawano.

Use of Bows and Crossbows

- All hunters may now hunt deer with a crossbow during the crossbow-only deer hunting season, but must purchase a crossbow license.
- Laws regulating the use of bows and crossbows for hunting within cities or villages may have changed. Check with local city or village authorities for local ordinance restrictions.

Additional New Rules

- It is illegal to discharge a firearm, bow or crossbow on, from or across state trails and other areas which are shown as closed to hunting within state parks. Hunters must review maps available at dnr.wi.gov or a state park office before hunting.
- Albino and all-white deer are now protected statewide, including those found within the CWD Affected Area.
- Bonus-buck opportunities have changed and are only available in the Southern Farmland Zone.
- Antlerless deer must be registered in-person at a DNR registration station before a Bonus-buck Authorization sticker is issued and before a hunter may harvest a bonus buck.
- Since 2013, department rules have allowed the use of rifles for hunting deer during most firearm deer seasons.



DNR PHOTO

Deer Management Zones in 2014

Wisconsin has been divided into four deer management zones: northern forest, central forest, central farmland, and southern farmland. Management zones are broadly based on similar habitat and land-use types, as well as other factors like herd productivity and winter weather. Zone boundaries allow for the establishment of an easily recognizable and consistent deer season framework from year to year.

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For 2014, traditional Deer Management Units have been eliminated and replaced with a simple county-based system. Regular, herd control and chronic wasting disease DMUs have been eliminated.

Deer Management Units in 2014

For 2014, traditional Deer Management Units (identified by numbers and letters and delineated using areas of similar habitat type and road and river boundaries) have been eliminated and replaced with a simple county-based system. Deer management units have been simplified from 134 units to 72 county-based and 4 tribal reservation units. Deer hunters will need to have a good idea where county boundaries are located before they start hunting, since many do not follow roads or rivers like DMUs used in the past.

Regular, herd control and chronic wasting disease DMUs have been eliminated. Free CWD-management zone and \$2 herd control tags no longer exist and have been replaced with one free farmland zone antlerless deer carcass tag that will accompany the purchase of each deer license.

Deer Registration in 2014

For fall 2014, all hunters must register their deer at an in-person deer registration station. A small number of hunters will be randomly selected by the department and asked to participate in the pilot program for a new electronic registration system – available to all hunters starting in 2015. See the 2014 Deer Hunting Regulations for further details regarding deer registration.

In 2015, all hunters will have the option to register their deer using a telephone or through participating businesses that will remain a registration station. If you are not part of this year's pilot program, please register your deer at an in-person registration station like in past seasons.

State Parks

Wisconsin state parks are no longer designated as individual DMUs. Deer hunting is allowed in most state parks, although hunters should check the 2014 Deer Hunting Regulations for any exceptions. Hunting access permits are no longer required for hunting in state parks, but vehicle admission stickers are still required.

Buck-only Units

In 2014, 19 county units, in whole or in part, are designated as buck-only units. This approach will encourage herd growth. In these units, a Buck Deer Carcass Tag is issued with each deer license and is valid statewide (except during antlerless-only seasons in some units).

Bonus antlerless tags will not be available for purchase in buck-only units. However,

qualified members of the U.S. Armed Forces (home on furlough or leave) and Class A and C disabled permit hunters will be allowed to harvest an antlerless deer in any buck-only unit using their free Farmland Zone Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag. This tag will be issued with the purchase of each gun and bow or crossbow deer license. Youth hunters ages 10–17 will also be allowed to harvest an antlerless deer in any buck-only unit using their free Junior Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag, issued with the purchase of each gun and bow or crossbow deer license.

Metro Sub-units

In the past, six distinct metropolitan DMUs existed near major urban areas. These boundaries have been retained to allow additional hunting opportunities not found elsewhere. In general, when purchasing Bonus Antlerless Deer Carcass Tags for use in a Metro Sub-unit, hunters should select bonus tags using the county DMU where the tag is to be valid. One exception can be found in Douglas County, which is designated as a buck-only unit. Hunters in this area will purchase bonus antlerless tags for the Superior Metro Sub-unit in 2014.

Some local municipalities may have weapons restrictions – hunters are encouraged to check local ordinances before hunting in Metro Sub-units.

Antlerless Deer Permits in 2014

With each deer hunting license, hunters will receive one Buck Deer Carcass Tag valid statewide and one free Farmland Zone Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag valid for use in any Central Farmland or Southern Farmland

Whitetail Deer • Snowshoe Hare

Zone DMU and on any land type (public or private). Free Farmland Zone tags may not be used in the Northern Forest or Central Forest zones.

Bonus Antlerless Deer Carcass Tags are zone, unit and land-type specific. At the time of purchase, hunters will need to know their zone, county and whether they intend to harvest antlerless deer on public or private lands. Bonus antlerless tags will be available for \$12 for residents, \$20 for nonresidents and \$5 for youth (ages 10 and 11). Hunters may purchase one unit-specific bonus antlerless deer tag per day, where available, until the unit is sold out or until the hunting season ends.

Note that the first three days of sales are zone-specific and begin:

Monday, August 18 10 AM

— Northern and Central Forest Zones;

Tuesday, August 19 10 AM

— Central Farmland Zone;

Wednesday, August 20 10 AM

— Southern Farmland Zone;

Thursday, August 21 10 AM

— all zones with remaining permits available.

Hunters have asked the department to more closely regulate antlerless deer harvest on more heavily-hunted public lands. In response, changes have been made to the use and availability of bonus antlerless deer tags. In 2014, hunters will select bonus antlerless tags based on the type of land they hunt (public or private). "This is a first attempt at addressing hunter concerns," said Marinette County wildlife biologist Janet Brehm. "Over the next couple years, we'll



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look at how it worked and, if needed, we can develop a new system."

Public lands include state, federal or county properties open to hunting, Managed Forest Law and Forest Crop Law lands designated as open for public hunting, and Voluntary Public Access lands leased for public hunting. Private lands include all lands not listed. It is important to remember that hunters must have permission to hunt on all private lands.

Bonus antlerless permit availability may vary by Deer Management Zone or DMU. Each of the four zones contains several DMUs – nine DMUs are split by zone boundaries.

In 2014, antlerless permit availability will vary between the Farmland Zone and Forest Zone portions of the following county DMUs: Adams, Clark, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, Marinette, Monroe, Oconto and Wood.

For more information regarding bonus antlerless permit availability and sales, pick up a copy of the 2014 Wisconsin bonus antlerless deer permit information sheet (available wherever hunting licenses are sold) or visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "[deer](#)."

Bonus Buck in 2014

In the southern farmland zone, all hunters may harvest one buck deer with their gun buck deer carcass tag, one buck deer with their bow buck deer carcass tag, and additional buck deer using bonus buck opportunities.

Hunters can earn bonus buck authorization stickers by first harvesting and registering an antlerless deer in any southern farmland zone DMU. Upon harvest, a bonus buck authorization sticker will be issued to the hunter.

Hunters may only use one 2014 bonus buck authorization sticker during the 2014 season.

Bonus buck regulations will be addressed in the permanent deer trustee report rule in fall 2014 – any unused 2014 bonus buck authorization stickers may or may not be valid in 2015.

All bonus buck authorization stickers earned in 2013 will be valid in 2014. A hunter can use any valid 2014 deer carcass tag to tag a bonus buck, but must first attach a 2013 or 2014 bonus buck authorization sticker to the carcass tag.

Central Farmland & Central Forest Zone Antlerless-only Hunt

The four-day December Antlerless-only deer season will no longer be a statewide hunt. The four-day December Antlerless-only deer season will now occur in the Central Farmland and Central Forest zones only. The season will be held December 11–14 in all Central Farmland and Central Forest zone DMUs (except non-quota areas and buck-only portions of units). Hunters will need to possess (or be in a group with someone that does) an antlerless deer carcass tag valid for the unit in which they choose to hunt. All gun, archery and crossbow deer hunters and small game hunters are required to meet blaze orange clothing requirements during the December Antlerless-only hunt.

Hunters!

If you see a deer with one of these,



Or one of these,



It's part of a DNR study on deer mortality.

Treat marked deer like any other deer in the woods.

Don't shy away from shooting it if it has a collar or tag.
We want to measure hunter kills as part of the study.

Thanks for your help! Good luck, and have a safe season!



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Youth Gun Deer Hunt

The youth gun deer hunt will be held October 11–12. This special hunt was established to provide youth hunters with an opportunity to hunt with low hunting pressure and the guidance of a mentor.

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**The Youth Gun Deer Hunt
will be held October 11–12.**

The youth gun deer hunt will be held in all DMUs statewide. Resident and non-resident youth hunters ages 10–15 who possess a valid gun deer hunting license may participate. It is important to note that youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult parent or guardian during this hunt, even if the youth hunter holds a hunter education certificate.

Qualified youth hunters may harvest one buck deer with their gun buck deer carcass tag and one antlerless deer for each unused antlerless deer carcass tag (valid for use in the specified zone and DMU). Youth hunters must be within arm's length of an adult mentor. No more than two youth hunters may be accompanied by a single mentor. Supervising adults may not hunt while accompanying or mentoring a youth deer hunt. All statewide deer, turkey and small game hunters, with the exception of waterfowl hunters, are required to meet blaze orange requirements during the 2014 youth gun deer hunt.

Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities

The 2014 gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities will be held October 4–12. This special hunt was established to provide disabled hunters who might not have an opportunity to participate in the various deer hunting seasons because of their disabilities a chance to enjoy the state's rich deer hunting tradition.

Disabled hunters with a valid Class A, C or D disabled permit, or Class B permit that is issued for longer than one year (and authorizes hunting or shooting from a stationary vehicle) may participate.

"We've been very fortunate to have such a great outflowing of support from landowners in the state," said DNR gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities program coordinator Dan Kaminski. "For this year's hunt, we've enrolled over 76,000 acres of land in 44 counties."

The gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities is not a statewide season. This special hunt is only authorized on lands specifically enrolled in the disabled hunt program. Landowners or managers interested in sponsoring lands for the 2015 hunt must submit an online application before June 1, 2015.

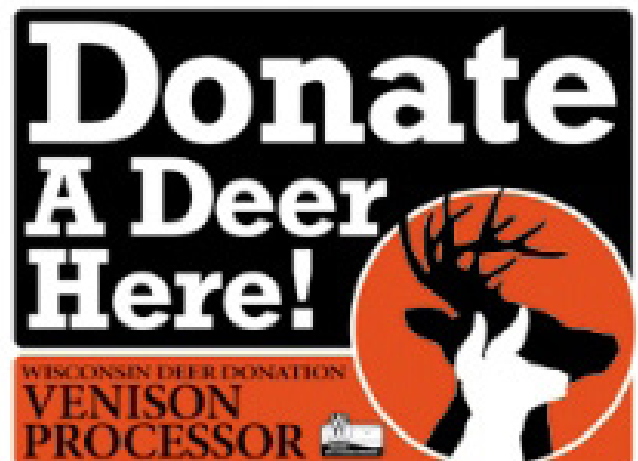
Qualified disabled hunters are encouraged to contact sponsors as early as possible and before September 1.

For a list of sponsors for the 2014 season, please visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "[disabled deer hunt](#)."



JONATHAN EDGERLY \ US ARMY

NEW! The venison donation program starts at the beginning of archery season this year.



Get Involved in Wisconsin's Deer Management!

There are many opportunities available for you to take an active role in the management of white-tailed deer in Wisconsin. Follow the instructions below to help play your part!

Deer Hunter Wildlife Survey

Help monitor the relative abundance and distribution of deer and other wildlife species in Wisconsin. Use an online form to record your experiences and submit information you collected during your time in the field. To submit your observations, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "[deer hunter wildlife](#)."

Operation Deer Watch

Help monitor deer reproduction in Wisconsin! Keep a tally sheet in your car to record all deer sightings from August 1 to September 30. DNR biologists are interested in all buck, doe and fawn sightings. Your data is combined with DNR staff observations to help estimate fawn-to-doe ratios and deer population estimates. For more information regarding Operation Deer Watch, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "operation deer watch."

Trail Camera Photos

Trail cameras are a valuable resource in documenting the distribution and abundance of various wildlife species – especially rare or endangered animals. Send in your trail camera photos during any season of the year. To submit photos, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "deer hunter wildlife."

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Deer Herd Forums and Online Surveys

Informational meetings are held throughout Wisconsin each spring. These forums provide a perfect opportunity to speak directly to local wildlife biologists and learn more about deer biology and management, population objectives, and harvest statistics for your favorite hunting areas. In-person participants at each forum and those using online tools can provide their personal input to the department. To provide input, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "[deer hunter forum](#)."

Conservation Congress Spring Hearings

Annual Wisconsin Conservation Congress meetings give citizens the opportunity to comment and vote on proposed fish and wildlife rule changes and submit resolutions for future rule changes. WCC meetings are held in each county statewide on the second Monday in April. This opportunity is unique to Wisconsin and helps play a significant role in determining how you enjoy your time in the outdoors. For more information regarding spring hearings, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "[spring hearings](#)."

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**To help deer hunters prepare
for the 2014 season, the
department will host a number
of online chats with wildlife and
regulations experts**

Contact Your Local Biologist!

Wildlife biologists are available to speak with you and to answer questions, address any concerns you have and to gather input when setting the upcoming deer season framework. To get in touch with your local wildlife biologist, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "[contact](#)."

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**The Wisconsin Conservation
Congress gives citizens the
unique opportunity to influence
the state's conservation policies**



Volunteers helping DNR researchers weigh fawns.

DNR PHOTO

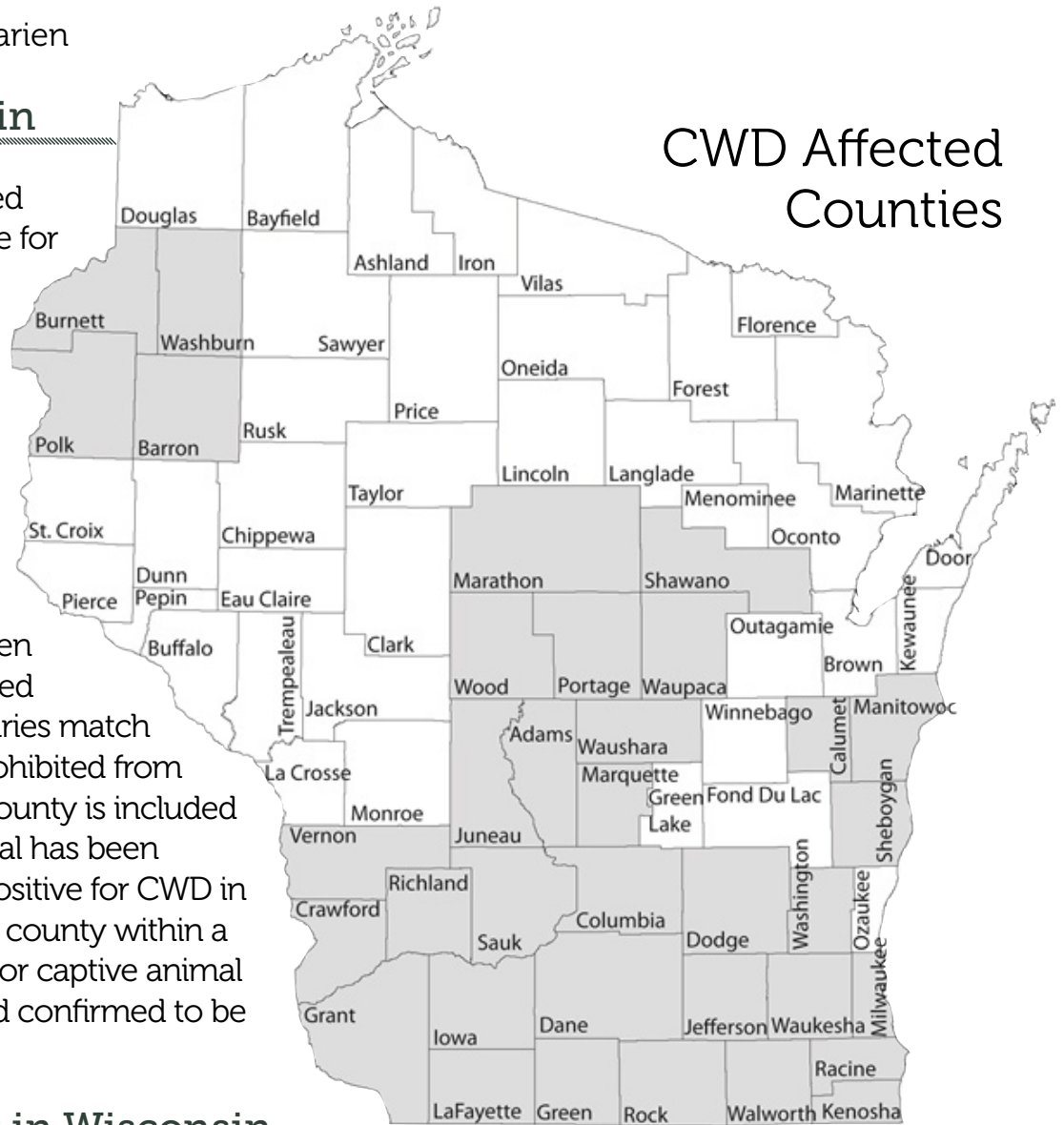
Where Can I Find More Information?

Hunters are encouraged to check out the frequently asked questions page for additional information. The FAQ feature provides brief responses to a wide variety of deer hunting questions, ranging from deer management unit boundaries to antlerless permits.

To help deer hunters prepare for the 2014 season, the department will host a number of online chats with wildlife and regulations experts. For more information and to view a schedule of upcoming chats, visit dnr.wi.gov for keyword "[chat](#)." For more information regarding deer season in Wisconsin, visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "[deer](#)."

CWD in Wisconsin

CWD Affected Counties



CWD Monitoring in Wisconsin

After the 2012 CWD discovery in Washburn County, the department initiated a surveillance strategy based on a great deal of input from the public. Thanks to overwhelming cooperation from Wisconsin hunters, over 1,500 deer have been sampled from the area, with no new positives detected. Based on this comprehensive sampling, all signs indicate that CWD is not widespread in the area. It is currently at a very low prevalence rate in the area, and we may have discovered it early.

The 2012 discovery of CWD in wild deer in Juneau, Adams and Portage counties prompted a 2013 surveillance effort over a 10-mile radius surrounding the positives (utilizing hunter harvested deer). These efforts resulted in the detection of additional positives in Adams and Portage counties. In Portage County, two of the positives were from the southern part of the county, where no wild deer had previously tested positive.

CWD Prevalence in Wisconsin

Since 2002, CWD prevalence within our western monitoring area in the former CWD-MZ has shown an overall increasing trend in all sex and age classes. In the past 12 years, the trend in prevalence in adult males has risen from between 8–10 percent to nearly 25 percent. In adult females, prevalence has risen from between 3–4 percent to more than 10 percent. During the same period, the prevalence trend in yearling males has increased from roughly 2 percent to about 7 percent. In yearling females, rates have increased from 2 percent to roughly 6 percent.

Despite yearly fluctuations, overall prevalence in the former CWD-MZ has doubled across all sex and age classes of deer. It is important to keep in mind that annual prevalence estimates are subject to sampling variation – trends over time give better information.

2014 CWD Sampling in Wisconsin

For the 2014 deer season, the department will continue to sample deer within the former CWD-MZ as well as select locations within the CWD-affected area.



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Exact sampling locations will be available at registration and sampling stations and on the department website prior to the opening of the 2014 archery season. The department will also sample deer in CWD-positive deer areas in Washburn, Adams, Juneau and Portage counties.

The weighted surveillance program using taxidermists as sampling cooperators will continue to function as a key portion of the department's testing efforts. By focusing the collection and sampling effort on select age and sex classes of deer, this program helps to increase the efficacy and efficiency of statewide detection surveillance efforts. Since CWD is found at higher prevalence rates in adult males than in other demographic groups, the department works closely with taxidermists who routinely receive older age bucks. In 2013, taxidermists in Dodge, Vernon and Crawford counties provided samples – no positives were detected.



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CWD in North America

As of 2014, 21 states and provinces have identified CWD within free-ranging herds of deer, elk and moose. In some cases, CWD has been detected in only a handful of animals; in others, vast geographic areas and large numbers of deer are affected.

In Colorado and Wyoming, regions where CWD has been present for several decades, recent studies have documented prevalence rates of 20 to 40 percent. In Wyoming, high prevalence rates (roughly 35 percent) have been identified across extensive geographic areas, encompassing more than 4,000 square miles. Research suggests CWD is reducing deer numbers in these populations. Examining CWD in other states helps to anticipate future impacts of the disease in Wisconsin.

Successfully managing CWD will require a sustained effort and cooperation and communication among DNR, hunters, agricultural agencies, landowners, farmed cervid producers, and the many citizens of the state who benefit from a healthy deer herd.

DNR game managers are grateful to hunters and conservationists for their role in helping manage CWD. Wisconsin is very fortunate to have citizens with such a great conservation ethic and high appreciation for the natural world. Hunters are the cornerstone of conservation and wildlife management – your help and assistance is invaluable. For more information regarding Chronic Wasting Disease in Wisconsin, please visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "[CWD](#)."

Deer Research

Contributed by Daniel Storm
and Dustin Bronson

In 2011, the department began an ambitious deer research study in Wisconsin, taking a close look at survival rates and mortality in white-tailed deer. The department's goal is to learn more about specific causes of death in Wisconsin deer - whether from disease, predators, weather, vehicles or hunters.

This knowledge will be used to refine DNR's population estimating formula and help understand the impacts various types of mortality may have on overall deer survival.

The winter of 2013-2014 was the fourth and final season of deer capture for the mortality project. Over the course of the study, 1,001 deer were collared. Over 1,000 volunteers participated in deer capture and helped provide much needed assistance.

Lands Open for Public Hunting

If you are looking for a place to hunt this fall, please visit the dnr.wi.gov to learn more about public-access lands in Wisconsin. Wisconsin has an abundance of land open to hunting, including state, federal and county forests, state-managed wildlife, fisheries and natural areas, and private land enrolled in the Managed Forest Law, Forest Crop Law, Voluntary Public Access, or Wisconsin Damage and Abatement Claims programs. In all, hunters have access to nearly seven million acres of land throughout Wisconsin.



DNR PHOTO

Our deer-capture tool kit included box and netted cage traps, drop nets, and darting. Captured deer were fitted with radio-collars, ear tags, or both. The department will continue to monitor radio-collared deer through the 2014 deer hunting season.

During late spring, wildlife biologists assessed the pregnancy rates and fat reserves of 522 deer killed in vehicular collisions. Specifically, biologists examined fat stores at various points within the deer carcass, including the rump, around the heart and kidneys, and in bone marrow. This statewide effort will help to better understand how the previous winter impacted the deer herd.

In January 2014, 10 mature white-tailed does (greater than 2.5 years of age) were outfitted with global positioning system collars across Vilas County. These deer will be monitored over time to investigate movement rates across seasons and evaluate forest composition use within home ranges. In conjunction with additional collared deer, these mature does will help provide a better understanding of how deer utilize forest habitat and how management of our forests ultimately affects deer.

District Deer Season Forecasts

West Central District Forecast

Contributed by Dave Matheys

Although deer hunting regulations and deer management strategies have changed for 2014, deer populations across most of the West Central District remain healthy. As deer management units have been realigned to coincide with county boundaries, the number of deer management units in the WCD has been reduced from 30 to 19. Deer hunters may find this consolidation less confusing, but will need to know where county boundaries are located prior to hunting.

In addition, the WCD lays within 3 distinct deer management zones: the Southern Farmland Zone, Central Farmland Zone and Central Forest Zone. The objective in Farmland zones is to stabilize deer populations, while the Forest Zone's objective is to increase deer populations. The availability of antlerless deer tags reflects these overall objectives. There are



some notable differences in hunting seasons between each zone. For example, the Central Forest and Central Farmland zones will continue to offer the 4-day December Antlerless Hunt, while the Southern Farmland Zone will

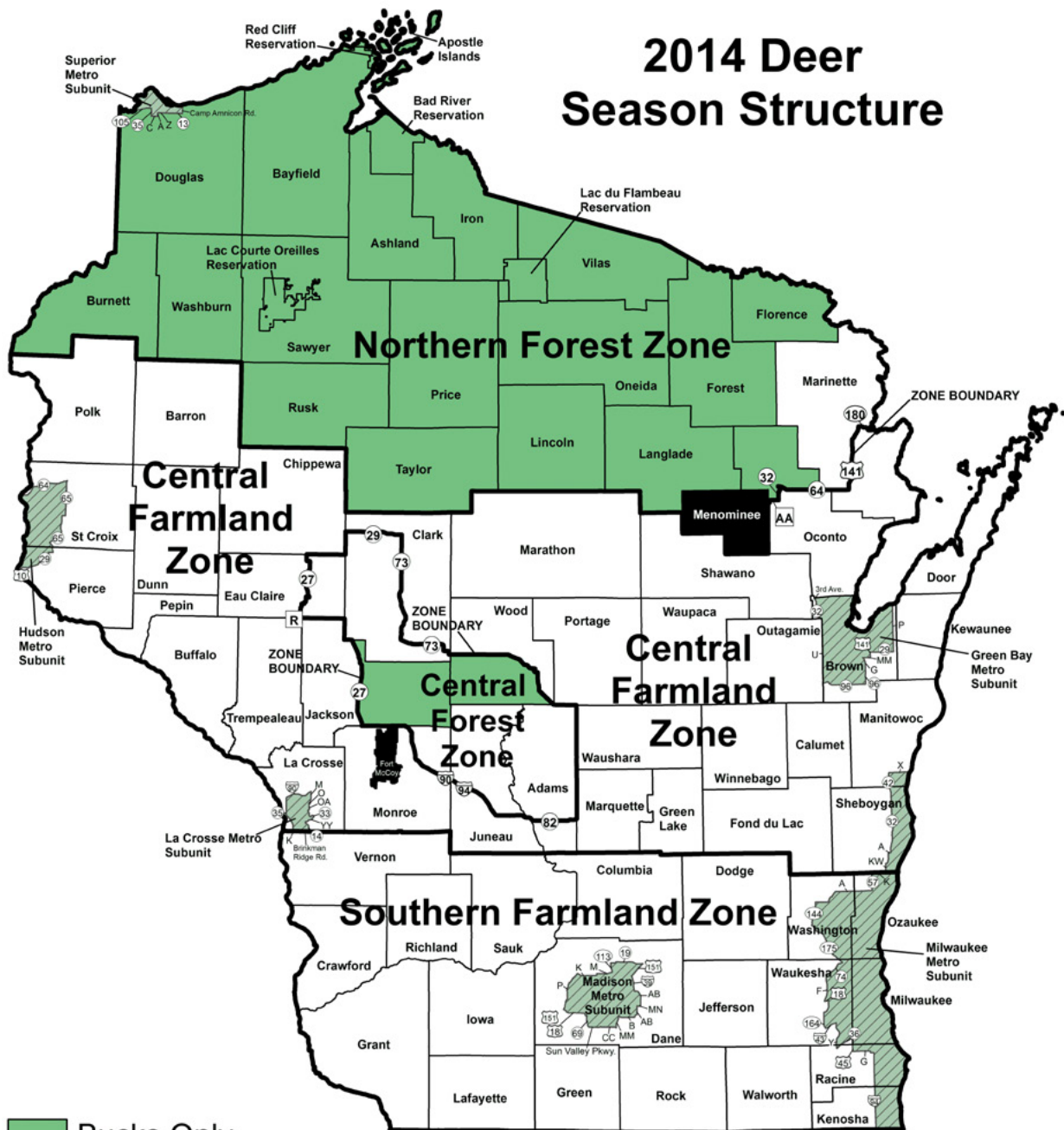
offer a December 24 – January 1 Southern Farmland Zone Antlerless-only Holiday Hunt. Hunters are strongly encouraged to become familiar with new deer zones, units and regulations before the hunting season begins.

Generally speaking, deer in the WCD's Farmland zones are doing well - hunters can expect to see deer numbers comparable to 2013 or better. According to DNR wildlife biologist for Buffalo and Trempealeau counties Mark Rasmussen, the harsh winter of 2013-14 had a minimal effect on the local deer herd. Deer numbers seem to be excellent in both counties, and there should be ample hunting opportunities for archers and gun hunters.

Similar thoughts were expressed by wildlife biologist Ryan Haffele for the Pierce and St. Croix county area and wildlife biologist Bill Hogseth for Chippewa and Eau Claire counties. According to Haffele, car-killed deer assessments revealed that the majority of does in the area carry twins. Good numbers of fawns with does are being observed, indicating that there should be a healthy number of deer to chase this fall, with excellent opportunities in the Hudson Metro Subunit. Public land antlerless tags in this area are limited and will likely sell out early.

Hunters who traditionally hunt on public land, especially in county forests, are encouraged to purchase bonus antlerless tags early. With a new public-private land permit system, bonus tags have been significantly reduced for public lands in Eau Claire and Chippewa

2014 Deer Season Structure



- Bucks Only
- Bucks plus antlerless by permit
- Non-quota Area - No permits issued by DNR
- Metro Subunits - Bucks plus antlerless by permit

* Menominee reservation unit firearm season is for tribal members only - season set by Menominee Tribe

* Deer harvested on non-tribal lands within the Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Lac du Flambeau or Red Cliff Reservation units should be registered using the county and then the Reservation DMU designation

* Deer harvested in Metro Subunits should be registered using the county DMU and then Metro Subunit designation



STEVE HILLEBRAND/USFWS

counties, and they may sell out before the start of the gun deer season. Permit levels were lowered in response to public concerns that deer have been over-harvested on county forest properties.

According to Black River Falls' wildlife biologist Scott Roepke, while this past winter was very long with above average snow depth and cold temperatures, it seems deer in the Central Farmland Zone counties that occupy good habitat came through the winter in fair condition. Many adult does have been observed over the past couple of weeks with at least one fawn. There have been a fair number of does with two fawns, and even the occasional report of triplets.

We will have a better picture of the impact that winter had on reproduction in the coming months as we begin to gather data regarding the ratio of fawns observed per doe. This is part of a long-term survey that DNR staff conducts every summer. Hunters can assist with this "Citizen Science Project," and are encouraged

to participate in Operation Deer Watch to assist DNR staff with gathering deer observation data. Results will help inform management decisions for fall 2015.

Overall, counties within the Central Farmland and Southern Farmland zones hold abundant deer populations, and hunters will find great opportunities to put some meat in the freezer this fall if they are able to spend time scouting. Deer are currently in their summer patterns, and hunters can key in on those movements and have great success the first couple of weeks of archery season - especially with an early opener in 2014. Bucks will likely still be in bachelor groups, and can be very visible and predictable from late August into mid-September. Hunters should also pay close attention to the acorn crop in their areas and focus on areas with concentrations of white and bur oak. When acorns begin to drop, deer will key in on this vital food resource and their movement patterns will change accordingly.

Central Forest Zone wildlife biologist

Wayne Hall predicts deer numbers and deer hunting opportunities to be similar to those experienced in 2013. The deer herds in the Forest zones are not as productive as in the Farmland zones and are slower to increase. Hall notes that adequate and timely spring and summer moisture has vegetation in excellent, lush conditions. Blueberries, huckleberries and blackberries have abundant fruits and are highly sought after by deer.

Hunters who traditionally hunt the Central Forest Zone areas of Eau Claire, Clark, Jackson, Wood, Adams, Juneau and Monroe counties will see some major changes this year with regard to management zones, deer management units, tagging options, and quotas. Black River Falls' area wildlife supervisor Kris Johansen strongly encourages hunters to pick up a copy of the 2014 regulations prior to the season and familiarize themselves with the new zone and deer management unit boundaries.

Quotas for management units within the Central Forest Zone have been reduced following two harsh winters and a decline in deer numbers. Most notably, portions of Wood and Jackson counties within the Central Forest Zone will have buck-only hunting, while the remaining counties within the Central Forest Zone will have limited antlerless tags available for public and private lands. Central Forest Zone antlerless tags (where available) will go on sale (first come, first served) Aug. 18 at 10 AM

Deer hunters will also need to be aware of Chronic Wasting Disease–Affected counties in 2014. Marathon County wildlife biologist Cortney Schaefer



STEVE HILLEBRAND/USFWS

reminds hunters that two captive deer have tested positive for CWD in southeastern Marathon County. Marathon County is already included on the list of counties with baiting and feeding bans, but hunters in the southeastern portion of the county should expect more efforts to collect tissue samples for CWD testing in the area. Biologists will be stationed at deer registration stations in Marathon, Portage, Adams and Juneau counties to collect CWD samples.

DNR staff will also be collecting tissue samples in Crawford and Vernon counties during opening weekend of the 9-day gun deer season as part of ongoing surveillance. This is the second consecutive year of CWD surveillance in these two counties. So far, CWD has not been detected in the area. Surveillance station locations will be announced closer to the gun deer season.

West Central District wildlife management staff is available to answer any questions regarding 2014 deer season changes – just give us a call or stop in. We encourage all deer hunters to have a safe, fun and successful hunt this season.



JOHN STEHN/USFWS

Northern District Forecast

Contributed by Pete Engman

Conditions during the winter of 2013-2014 were severe across northern Wisconsin. We experienced heavy snow and cold temperatures that began in late November - snow levels continued to build through the winter months, and did not moderate until late April. Record or near-record winter severity readings were taken at many sites in the northern forest. In addition to deep snow, as many as 78 days were observed in which the temperature dropped below zero.

Results from our deer research conducted in the Northern Forest study area confirmed winter's harsh effects. Fawn mortality averaged approximately 43 percent, and adult deer mortality was measured at 10 percent. In addition to the direct loss of deer due to winter severity,

pregnant does came out of the winter in poor condition, which will likely result in reduced recruitment. Local field biologists conducted numerous site visits to deer yards and examined car-killed deer throughout the district to check health and condition. Deer were examined for fat deposits and bone marrow condition.

A late spring in 2014 resulted in a delayed green-up and may compound the stress caused by severe winter conditions. Hunters should expect to see fewer fawns during this fall's hunt. Antler development will likely be reduced and may be especially poor in yearling bucks.

As a result of the severe winter, there will be no antlerless tags available in any counties in the Northern District, and a reduced number of antlerless tags will be available in the Farmland Zone fringe counties (Polk and Barron). Only class A and C disabled hunters, in addition to youth hunters and qualified members of the armed forces, will be allowed to harvest antlerless deer in buck-only units.

While this past winter was severe, this is not a new phenomenon. Northern Wisconsin's deer have survived tough winter weather in the past, and when more moderate conditions return populations will rebound. The elimination of antlerless tags is a logical step in encouraging herd recovery.

Northeast District Forecast

Contributed by Jeff Pritzl

Although winter 2013-14 measured even more stressful for deer than winter 2012-13, fewer losses related to winter weather were reported. Deer in the Northeast District have entered the

fawning season in somewhat better condition. The 2013 harvest numbers showed a small decline in overall harvest, and there is no reason to assume the 2014 harvest will be affected more significantly than last year.

However, recognizing that two severe winters in a row will affect fawn production, antlerless harvest has been severely restricted in the Northern Forest Zone this fall. This zone covers northern Marinette and Oconto Counties in the Northeast District. A small antlerless quota has been established for northern Marinette County - the herd is healthy there and crop damage is still quite prevalent.

Antlerless deer harvest increased in much of the district last year - this may have reflected awareness by hunters that some fawns did die the previous winter. Harvesting antlerless deer during the season is better for overall herd health than leaving them to over-browse the forests in winter before they die, and this may have contributed to the lower winter losses observed this year. Although official surveys had not begun in time for the 2014 fall forecast, observations indicate that this year's fawn production is healthy.

Modest increases in buck harvest are projected this fall in most of the Northeast District, except the two Northern Forest Zone deer management units where harvest is likely to be similar to (if not somewhat below) levels experienced in 2013. Hunters will begin building new sets of harvest statistics this year and, together with wildlife biologists, will learn about deer population and harvest trends in the future.



DNR PHOTO

Southern District Forecast

Contributed by Eric Lobner

The Southern District deer herd will continue to see great variation in 2014 relating to the number of deer on the landscape. Many areas within the district will offer hunters an increased opportunity to see and harvest deer, while other areas have seen stable or slightly-less deer numbers than in previous years. The Southern District encompasses a wide range of deer habitats, from wooded ridges and coulées in the southwest, to the flatter, agriculturally-dominated landscape in Green, Rock and Walworth counties along the Illinois border. The rolling southern kettles in the east and the extensive wetland and woodland areas of Dodge and Columbia counties offer stark contrast from other regions within the district. A high level of variation in habitat types and conditions results in local deer numbers that can vary dramatically from one square mile to the next.

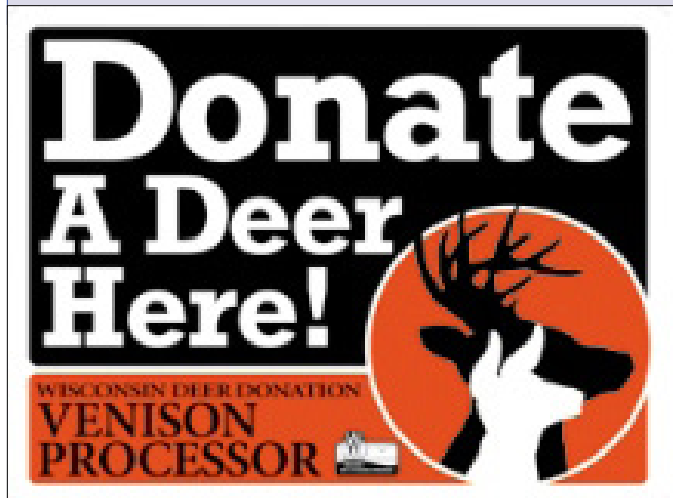
Although the extremely cold conditions experienced last winter throughout Wisconsin proved difficult for many people to tolerate, car-killed deer



N. & M.J. MISHLER / USFWS

assessments completed by department wildlife management staff in the Southern District indicated that deer survived winter quite well. Of 125 car-killed deer that were inspected during March and April, body assessments indicated that fat content was at a moderate to high level, and there was an average of 1.7 fawns per 1.5 year old or older doe. In

NEW! The venison donation program starts at the beginning of archery season this year.



general, deer populations throughout the entire Southern District have stabilized or increased over the last several years.

Southern District hunters are encouraged to get out early, take time to scout the land they will be hunting, and travel the roads in the area to get a good understanding of the changes in their neighborhood. Deer shift their movements each year according to changing food sources or conditions, changing habitat types and conditions, and human activity.

Over the last several years, enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program has decreased, so land that was once grassland or tree cover may now be corn or soybeans. In addition, mature trees may have been harvested and will now be freshly cut or have re-sprouting trees anywhere from 1–10 feet or more in height. As a result, deer patterns can shift. A hunter sitting in the stand that yielded deer year after year a decade ago may be hard pressed to see a deer this year.

Most Southern District deer are harvested on private property, which makes up more than 90 percent of the landscape. However, good deer hunting can also be found on the thousands of acres of county, state and federally owned lands open to deer hunting in the district. Hunters who are interested in finding public land available for hunting can visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "public lands." Hunters interested in hunting on private lands are advised to get out well in advance of deer season to meet with landowners and seek permission to hunt.

Hunters are strongly encouraged to spend time getting familiar with changes resulting from Deer Trustee Report implementation. It is important to note that free CWD-Management Zone and \$2 Herd Control tags are no longer available. Resident hunters interested in additional antlerless tags will need to purchase them for \$12 (\$20 for non-resident and \$5 for youth ages 10 and 11). The Holiday Hunt, which used to run until the end of the archery season, has been reduced and will now end January 1. The Holiday Hunt area will grow slightly to include the Southern Farmland Zone - only antlerless deer may be harvested during the Holiday Hunt.

Chronic Wasting Disease continues to increase in prevalence within the Southern District herd. The overall infection rate of adult males is currently 20 percent in the western CWD core area and 6 to 8 percent in the east. The CWD-Management Zone has been changed to the CWD-Affected Area, which has been expanded to include every county in the district (except Ozaukee). Counties within the CWD-Affected Area are counties in which a CWD positive deer has been detected or is within 10 miles of a CWD-positive



JOHN CICHOSZ

test result. It is important for hunters to remember that feeding and baiting deer is prohibited in the CWD-Affected Area. An updated list of locations where hunters can get their deer tested will be posted on the DNR website prior to the season opener.

Venison Donation Program

The venison donation program will allow hunters to donate deer to food pantries throughout Wisconsin, including the CWD-Affected Area. Field dressed deer can be donated (at no cost to the hunter) in each county, and will be sent to needy families within the area. This is an extremely valuable program that helps fill a growing need. A list of participating butchers and pantry drop-off sites will be available on the DNR website, at local deer registration sites, and at food pantry locations.